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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. National Security Strategy of the United States
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Bird Flu

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media (banners in Maariv and The Jerusalem Post) reported that on Sunday, Palestinian PM-designate Ismail Haniyeh presented the new Hamas cabinet, which includes only the Hamas faction, to PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas. Haniyeh confirmed that Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar would serve as foreign minister, while Said Siam, a top leader of the Islamic movement, would be in charge of the Interior Ministry. On Sunday, Yediot reported that the US is pressuring Abbas to delay the announcement about the new Palestinian government until after the Israeli elections.

Israel Radio quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying that Abbas's moment of truth has arrived and that the entire world is watching to see whether Abbas will endorse the Hamas government and its guidelines -- the adherence to the right of resistance and the right of return. Israel Radio quoted Saeb Erekat, who heads the PLO's negotiating team with Hamas, as saying that Abbas will give Hamas a chance and that he will not object to it forming the government. However, the radio quoted Erekat as saying that should a crisis arise and international assistance to the PA be frozen, Abbas would exercise his right to fire Haniyeh. The station cited Erekat's belief that Abbas will convene the parliament for a confidence motion in the government before the Arab League Summit scheduled for the end of this month. Ghazi Hamed, the editor of Hamas's periodical in Rafah, was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel Radio this morning that Fatah members are trying to hamper the Abbas-Hamas connection. Hamed was quoted as saying that Hamas is not opposed to Abbas holding negotiations with Israel, but that previous agreements with Israel are not binding on Hamas because the PLO had signed them. On Sunday, Hatzofe quoted anonymous Palestinian sources close to Abbas's bureau as saying on Saturday Abbas has promised to consider the proposal to resign his position and announce the disbanding of the Palestinian Authority and the handing over of responsibility for the Palestinian territories to Israel. Hatzofe quoted its sources as saying that A-Tayeb Abdel Rahim, a high-level deputy of Abbas, raised the proposal last Thursday in a meeting of Fatah's Central Committee. Hatzofe cited Israel's concern that Arab leaders might try, at the Arab League Summit, to erode the conditions set by the international community regarding a Hamas government.

All media continued to report extensively on the repercussions of the discovery of avian flu in Israel. Ha'aretz reported that the Agriculture Ministry announced Sunday that the virus that hit Israel is of

the lethal H5N1 strain. The newspaper reported that the authorities will cull one million birds.

The Jerusalem Post, Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that on Sunday afternoon, Israeli, PA, US, EU, and Egyptian officials met at US Ambassador Richard Jones's residence in Herzliya to look for a compromise over the crucial issue of crossing points with the Gaza Strip. The Jerusalem Post and Maariv reported that the PA agreed to open the Kerem Shalom crossing -- but only to goods coming from Egypt, not from Israel. The Jerusalem Post quoted Western diplomatic officials as saying that Israel's refusal to open up the Karni crossing, and its insistence in opening up Kerem Shalom instead, had less to do with security needs and more to do with an interest in getting out of the customs envelope agreement with the PA. Israel Radio reported that at the meeting at Ambassador Jones's, Israel agreed to transfer food to Gaza through Egypt today. Other major media reported on the Herzliya meeting.

Israel Radio reported that today, the EU will sign an agreement in Gaza to provide 64 million euros in aid to the Palestinians -- half the aid approved last month. On Sunday, Maariv reported that James Wolfensohn, the Quartet's Mideast Envoy who is about to end his service, cautioned in a strongly-worded letter that he sent to the leaders of the Quartet about the state of the PA, warning against a "humanitarian crisis" that he envisions will include a lack of basic supplies within two weeks." According to Maariv, Wolfensohn lays the blame for the above on Israel and the United States. The newspaper wrote that Wolfensohn's letter raises to new heights the crisis in relations between Wolfensohn and the US, which at this point is not interested in extending the former's service, and has exacerbated the chaos and uncertainty with regard to the PA's condition and its chances of survival. Israel Radio reported on two meetings that took place this morning on the matter of the reopening of the Karni crossing -- the first one between senior Defense Ministry official Amos Gilad and with Palestinian representatives; the second one between Acting PM Ehud Olmert and Shimon Peres, number two in Kadima, allowing the crossing to open today for several hours so that milk products and other goods can be brought into the Gaza Strip.

On Sunday, Maariv reported that dozens of American and Canadian security personnel, including high-ranking officials from the Department of Homeland Security and officers of the police force, would be arriving in Israel that day in order to participate in the first counterterrorism training of its kind provided by Israel.

Major media reported that border policemen accidentally killed a 10-year-old Palestinian girl north of Jenin on Friday.

Over the weekend, The Jerusalem Post and Yediot cited newly published research by Professors Stephen Walt of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, according to which pressure by Israel and AIPAC was the critical element in the decision that led to the US war against Iraq.

On Friday, the Arabic-language Assennara published the text of an exclusive interview with former Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam, who was quoted as saying that an opposition front would soon be set up in Syria, and that Israeli Intelligence appointed Israeli Knesset Member Azmi Bishara to mediate with Syria.

Leading media reported that a Palestinian man and his Israeli wife have petitioned the High Court of Justice to let them live together in Jerusalem or Ramallah.

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**1. National Security Strategy of the United States:**  
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**Summary:**  
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Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Is the new path of the battered administration going to involve sailing along on a cascade of words until its tenure ends, when it no longer has the willpower to act with the determination -- often rash, but at times necessary nevertheless -- that characterized it until not long ago?"

**Block Quotes:**  
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## "Commander or Ally"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 20): "According to the new National Security Strategy (NSS) document that was issued last week, President George Bush is making an effort to be seen as a more environmentally friendly ally. Both with respect to the more distant, global environment and the immediate environment -- the American public. Because strategy and politics are always intertwined, particularly in election years. And Bush now has to try to enhance his image, if not by actions, then at least by words. The NSS document is mandated by U.S. law, and should not be taken lightly.... The document thus reveals that the hardships that hinder the Bush administration have nothing to do with any loss of a strategic compass. It is a tactical and political difficulty. The question is whether Bush will exploit the narrow opening he left himself in the document: Will he be deterred from intervening once more, even when he knows he might again emerge bruised and battered? Is this document a compilation of sophisticated phraseology that merely conceals a big stick -- or is the new path of the battered administration going to involve sailing along on a cascade of words until its tenure ends, when it no longer has the willpower to act with the determination -- often rash, but at times necessary nevertheless -- that characterized it until not long ago?"

### 12. Mideast:

#### Summary:

Liberal columnist Dr. Gadi Taub wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "If there is something that really frightens Israelis, it is the thought that the US will stop supporting us."

Senior op-ed writer Akiya Eldar commented in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "If Israel wants to unilaterally disengage from territories in the West Bank, it must take into account that this is liable to cause disengagement from the international community, as well."

Senior columnist Haggai Huberman wrote in the editorial of nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "The border of the Gaza Strip ... has become a border of war in every way.... This is what will happen in the center of the country should Olmert's government carry out its political plan."

Columnist Bradley Burston wrote in Ha'aretz: "Right now, somewhere in the West Bank, there's an eight-year-old whose life could be saved next week, if we've managed to learn the lesson [of the death of American peace activist Rachel Corrie three years ago] and are resourceful enough to know how to apply it."

Prominent liberal author Amos Oz wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "We ought to bear in mind that the Arab countries have urgent and strong reasons to fear Hamas's rise to power, and to seek -- along with us -- a path of peace that will push the Hamas genie back into its bottle."

#### Block Quotes:

### 11. "Danger from the Direction of the United States"

Liberal columnist Dr. Gadi Taub wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (March 20): "If there is something that really frightens Israelis, it is the thought that the US will stop supporting us. Most of the time, fortunately enough, we do not think that this could really happen. But we should think again. A position paper was recently published, written by John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt of Harvard University, about the pro-Israel lobby in Washington.... According to the authors, the US has been conducting its foreign policy in the Middle East for many years on the basis of one solitary principle: unreserved support for Israel.... Despite the slightly hysterical tone of the document, and despite the fact that it occasionally slips into images that are reminiscent of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (the 'stranglehold' of the lobby on US politics), it should not be disregarded. Because one of its premises is correct: there is no assured identity of interests between the US and Israel.... The pro-Israel lobby is

not an eternal and all-encompassing Jewish power. It belongs to a particular generation.... There is, then, a dangerous combination here. On one hand, a rethinking of the support for Israel; on the other hand, a weakening of the pro-Israel forces in the US. But these are not processes over which no one has control, because it is not Israel that is standing in the way of the United States in the Middle East, but rather the occupation that is creating the conflict. Ending the occupation is necessary in order to stop the erosion of Jewish support for Israel, and it is also necessary to keep Israel from being a constant obstacle to the US foreign policy in the region. We have a limited window of opportunity to leave the territories. Not just because the occupation is corrupting us. But because within a few years a new map of US interests in the region will be drawn up, and we had better find ourselves on the right side of this map."

## II. "We Are Fed Up"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 20): "If Israel wants to unilaterally disengage from territories in the West Bank, it must take into account that this is liable to cause disengagement from the international community, as well. The day is not far off when the world will tell us: If you want to turn the Gaza Strip into a state of the Muslim Brotherhood -- have a nice time. If you want to starve Palestinian children -- then you pay the price for the humanitarian disaster. You've decided to disengage unilaterally from the West Bank? Don't come to us when Al Qaida opens a branch in Ramallah. To put it concisely: 'We are fed up with you.'"

## III. "The Results of Disengagement and the Knesset Elections"

Senior columnist Haggai Huberman wrote in the editorial of nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (March 19): "Starting this coming week, the Palestinian Authority is now a Hamas Authority by any reckoning. The solution of Olmert and Kadima for the new situation is one of withdrawal and flight, or 'convergence,' according to the new term invented and laundered by the left wing. We have all seen and endured for ourselves the results of the previous withdrawal: it led to the Hamas government's takeover of the Palestinian Authority. The border of the Gaza Strip ... has become a border of war in every way.... This is what will happen in the center of the country should Olmert's government carry out its political plan after the elections, God forbid. This reality should be foremost in the awareness of every Israeli voter, including those same members of the religious Zionist camp who have expressed their support for Kadima with no logical explanation for what they are doing."

## IV. "We Have with Whom to Talk"

Prominent liberal author Amos Oz wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (March 19): "We would do well were we to remind ourselves today as well that Hamas won the support of only 41 percent of the Palestinians who actually turned out to vote. It was only a distorted electoral system that gave Hamas a majority of the seats in the Palestinian parliament. Instead of humiliating Abu Mazen and the moderate Palestinian camp repeatedly, Israel ought to announce that it does not recognize the Hamas government, but only the government of the Presidency (Abu Mazen was elected to his post by an overwhelming majority of 62 percent). Negotiations with the Palestinian Presidency, should they end with a draft agreement, might produce a 'Hamas bypass route' and result in victory for the moderate Palestinian camp. On this issue, Meretz's position is the only alternative to the 'there's no one to talk to' point of view subscribed to by Olmert and Netanyahu. Israel has one more way of bypassing Hamas, and it is to engage in negotiations with the Arab governments over a comprehensive solution to each one of the fundamental components of the conflict on the basis of the Arab League's proposal in 2003 (the Saudi proposal).... No one expects Israel to sign on the whole offer.... [But] we ought to bear in mind that the Arab countries have urgent and strong reasons to fear Hamas's rise to power, and to seek -- along with us -- a path of peace that will push the Hamas genie back into its bottle. If a reasonable agreement is achieved between Israel and the Arab countries, then it is most certain that most of the Palestinians, with the encouragement and pressure of the Arab countries, will ratify the agreement in a referendum.... What about the Labor Party? There indeed are moderate forces with open eyes in the Labor

Party who will adopt Meretz's position. However, as usual, there are also others in the Labor Party whose political positions and emotional predilection is more akin to Olmert and Netanyahu's 'bunker.'"

1V. "Who Remembers Rachel Corrie?"

Columnist Bradley Burston wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 20): "Who remembers the name Rachel Corrie? In Israel, hardly anyone. But to many a pro-Palestinian American or Briton -- and to many of their pro-Israeli antagonists -- the mere mention of the name is enough to make the blood boil. It was three years ago this week that the 23-year-old native of Olympia, Washington, who had come to the Gaza Strip to protest against IDF demolitions of Palestinian houses, was crushed to death as she tried to block the path of a mammoth IDF armored bulldozer.... Incidental death. It's what we've learned to live with, the price of our security. We know we can't root it out altogether. But we have to look at it differently, honestly, in order to limit it as best we can.... Right now, somewhere in the West Bank, there's an eight-year-old whose life could be saved next week, if we've managed to learn the lesson and are resourceful enough to know how to apply it."

13. Bird Flu:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "It would be comforting to know that given this particular peril ... we could expect full, unstinting and sincere cooperation between all neighboring countries, as well as with the Palestinian Authority."

Block Quotes:

"A Case of the Flu"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (March 19): "Flu viruses mutate easily and frequently.... Extreme care, therefore, is imperative to isolate the outbreak as much as possible, given the fact that it's spread by undomesticated avian flocks that know no boundaries.... It would be comforting to know that given this particular peril -- one that doesn't differentiate between nationalities, religions and races -- we could expect full, unstinting and sincere cooperation between all neighboring countries, as well as with the Palestinian Authority.... Whatever erupts on one side of the divide isn't likely to have spared poultry in the immediately adjacent territory. International cooperation in such instances should be regarded both a humanitarian and health-preserving priority."

JONES